

Rep. Tom Udall (NM-03)
H.R. 3045 – DR-CAFTA
Floor Statement
July 27, 2005

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 3045, and in opposition to the unfair trade policies and burdensome costs to Americans that this agreement represents.

The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which binds together the trade policy and economic future of the U.S., Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, was negotiated over an eighteen-month period. As globalization takes hold in the world and our nation becomes further integrated economically with others, it is vital that we only enter into a trade agreement that will protect U.S. workers, consumers, and businesses, and that economic development, the proliferation of democracy, environmental protection and, most importantly, the rule of law is honored in the agreement.

Unfortunately, CAFTA does not meet these standards, and instead, includes provisions that will cause considerable distress and harm to U.S. workers and businesses. It lacks a sincere commitment to protecting American jobs. It lacks strong environmental protection provisions. It lacks strong public health provisions. It lacks worker protection provisions. It lacks consumer protection. One of the most egregious portions of CAFTA would allow drug patents to be extended beyond normal limits, thus denying CAFTA nations the opportunity to introduce and offer generic drugs to its citizens, the majority of whom are poor and cannot afford the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs. Perhaps most importantly, CAFTA lacks that comprehensive policy that should be an overarching feature of any multinational trade agreement – the ability to proactively engage and integrate the domestic business and labor policies of each nation to ensure that each realizes new, improved standards of living, economic standing, and commitments to democracy.

I will vote against CAFTA because I do not believe it will achieve these goals. And I am not alone. In my state of New Mexico, numerous labor and business organizations have voiced opposition to this trade agreement. Additionally, several agricultural organizations, including the New Mexico Cattleman Since the President signed CAFTA nearly one year ago, my constituents have continuously expressed to me their concerns of what CAFTA will mean for them and their families. And they continue, in greater and greater volume, to voice those concerns to me as we have begun debate on H.R. 3045 here in the House.

U.S. trade policy must be fair trade policy, and CAFTA is not. I believe we have squandered an opportunity to enact positive trade policy, and I believe enacting CAFTA will cost our American businesses and families. I oppose this legislation and urge my colleagues to do so as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.